Called! Monologue

Okay, is this on?

Okay, hey this is Rich Mullins here, and you just spent a whole week, or maybe you're in the midst of spending a week, or maybe you're getting ready to spend a week talking about the idea of being called. So we're going just gonna talk about it a little bit more. We're just going to ride this horse to death I think. Because I think it's a very important thing to understand what a calling is and to understand your own individual and personal call.

You can look at the world and you see a lot of trouble.

I was walking by a Benneton store. I was so disappointed because ordinarily I think they have these really wholesome and happy looking ad's. And there was an ad there, where they were selling Valentine clothes, which I'm not at all sure exactly what kind of clothes they handle. But this poster, there were two people, there were two young looking models, they looked like teenage types, and it was a shot from just below the waist up. And the guy didn't have a shirt on, which meant I'm not sure what they were selling from him. And he was standing next to this girl - very nice looking, kinda innocent, pretty red-haired girl - who was wearing I guess a pair of jeans, kindof unbuttoned and either a shirt or a jacket or something. But the significant thing about this thing she had on was that it wasn't buttoned up. Probably, for most of the guys walking by, they didn't notice what she was wearing - they noticed what she wasn't wearing.

They noticed that here were two bodies. And I think it's very significant that the boy and the girl - they're hands are kindof reaching out to one another - one of them is giving the other an apple or they're both holding an apple together. And I think that's a fairly obvious allusion, Christian or non-Christian, to the idea of the Fall. And a lot of people associate sexual awareness with the Fall. And here are these two very innocent looking people, and you get the idea that they're becoming sexually aware.

And this is all done to sell clothes.

And I was a little bit intrigued by the poster, and a little disappointed in the store for having put it up, and a little bit angry that we live in a world where our values are so twisted that we will use human sexuality, that we will use our bodies, that we will use people to sell products

Another good example of the kinda twisted values we have in our world is the fact that about ten thousand people die of starvation every day, in this world, on this planet. And of the tuna that is taken from the oceans in this world and on this planet, I think 80% of the tuna is fed to American cats and dogs so they will have a highly nutritious kindof feeding. I think it's a very twisted value that dogs and cats we are told have to have a high protein meal and so that somehow justifies feeding 80% of the tuna to them while ten thousand people die of starvation every day.

Another good example of the kindof twisted value is that in most states it is legal for a woman to kill a baby if she can use the excuse that the baby is endangering her life. But in no states anywhere is it legal for a baby to kill its mother if the mother is a detriment to its life, and I know a lot of people whose mothers has been a great detriment in their lives. And I think it's a little bit unfair. I think it's a little bit twisted that we have this value system.

Also an interesting thing along the same lines, is that there a good number of states where it is illegal for a girl under eighteen to get her ears pierced without parental excuse, without parental consent. And in a good number of those same states, it is perfectly legal for a girl under eighteen to have an abortion without parental consent.

There's a good word for all this - it's the word decadent. There's really nothing good about the word, except that it's very apt, it's very accurate. What decadent is all about - it comes from the same root as decayed.

And everybody knows what a decayed building or a decayed thing looks like. A decayed building is not the sort of building you'd want to walk in because the floor may give way underneath you, the ceiling may fall on your head, the walls aren't going to keep out the wind, the roof isn't going to keep the rain out. It's a worthless building that may at one time may have been substantial but it is no longer substantial.

And I think, in the history of mankind there has been one really terrifically significant question. And it's a question that actually is a very theological question. And I think the first person to ask that question was God. God

said to Adam and Eve, "Where are you?" Which is kindof another way maybe of saying "Who are you? What are you all about? What are you doing?" And I think people have had to ask themselves that ever since.

And we have a scientific community that tells us that we are plasma, that we are cells, that we're just a bunch of cells running around with electromagnetic impulses that we call thoughts or emotions and that they really don't amount to anything. We have a philosophical community that tell us the same kinda thing - that we're kindof these meaningless purposeless blobs that are left hanging suspended in a great void.

So I think today in contemporary society, there is a good bit of rage. Because nobody likes being told that they're insignificant. Nobody likes being told they don't amount to anything. And I think that it is appropriate that people should be angry when they're told they don't amount to anything.

You see, mankind has for thousands of years looked inwardly to find out who he is or where he is or what he's all about or where he's going. And he has never been able to find the answer within himself. And the entire Bible is a history of God trying to tell us who we are - trying to tell us who we are in Him and who we are without Him.

Contemporary people, modern people in contemporary society, do not like being told anything by anybody, but I think that it's time that we began to listen to the voice of God. Because apart from it we have nothing but decadence, we have nothing but decay. And the building, the structures that we have come up with that we hoped would give some sort of shelter to ourselves - they have begun to disappear, they have begun to decay, they are falling apart and the world is left in a lurch.

This is why I'm so glad that we have a Bible. I'm so glad that we have an authoritative answer to our questions. Not because I'm unwilling to search for myself, but there's a point where searching becomes pretty meaningless if there's no hope of finding . And I think what the scriptures do is they give us the hope of finding things.

I want to call your attention to Second Peter...

Now this is the second time I've gone through this, because we just made this tape a minute ago, only I got a little longwinded, which is a tendency

that I have. I have to confess. And I was still talking when the tape ran out, so I'm going to have to repeat myself, and I hope I can do it a little more concisely

In second peter the first chapter the third verse

Peter says, his divine power (or God's divine power) has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who has called through his own glory and goodness. Divine power gives us what we need for life.

When we try to live our lives under our own steam. When we try to live our lives under our own direction, we end up nowhere. Time and time again, this happens - we've already discussed that a little bit. But, His divine power has given us everything we need for life. His divine power empowers us to live. It gives us the capacity for meaningfulness. It gives us an ability to find some kind of significance. To find out who we are in Him. That comes from His power.

Also, through his power, we have everything we need for Godliness. Godliness is sometimes not a real popular idea because generally when we think of godliness, we get a picture of one of the holiness women with the beehive hair-dos. Or the German Baptist guys who grow beards and shave their mustaches. And everyone looks funny who has presented themselves as being Godly. Or we think of TV evangelists and we know there's nothing godly about most of them. So we're a little bit afraid of this word, a little bit embarrassed by it because it's been so badly misused.

When you think of what it means to be Godly, we don't need to think in terms of those images. What we need to understand is what godliness according to what God says. When we think of Godliness, we need to think about the character of God. And when we think of the character of God, the great attribute of God that marks God is love. And that is also the thing that marks godly people is love. And who of us don't want to be alive and who of us don't want to be loving - able to give and receive love.

That all comes by His divine power through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Our knowledge of Him who called us is a very important thing, and we need to apply ourselves to knowing Him. Through these - through His glory and goodness - He has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you

might participate in the divine or in godliness, and escape the corruption of this world caused by evil desires. The corruption of this world, the decadence, the instability of this world, all those things we talked about a little bit earlier. We can escape that -- we don't have to be controlled by what the scientific or the philosophical communities tell us, or political communities. We can come to understand who we are by what God tells us.

"For this very reason (in verse five he says), make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness, knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control, perseverance, and to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This is the interesting thing. We live in the 80's and this is the information age. And we think that information is everything. Information has a higher price on it at this time in our history than life. People will pay huge amounts of money to have information.

And so we tend to think that a lot of times that if we get the right information about God, the right information about the Christian life, the right information about Jesus, that that's what it really takes. And so a lot of the time that we spend reading the bible is time spent collecting information about God, collecting information about of the Bible, collecting information about this and that.

I always kinda get a kick out of going to Christian bookstores to seeing what the latest information rage is in Christian bookstores. What are they going to tell me about now? What facts are they going to be able to share with me that are going to change my life?

At one time it was time management - it was all the rage. You had to know about time management - it was the all-important thing. If you wanted to be a Christian, you had to manage your time.

Then it was all the sex manuals that came out where Christians got an opportunity to talk about sex because that taboo was finally lifted and there was just this rush - you had to understand sex. Which I never understood why I needed to since I didn't get to do anything about it - it was kindof

frustrating for me. But, that was the second rage.

Relationships have been a big rage. Just one thing after another. Discipling become the all-time great thing. The gifts of the holy spirit got a whole lot of attention at one time.

And people just read and read and read and read and read all these books. And I think it's funny because every one of these books tended to think they were real central to Christian life and to spiritual vitality. And yet every one of them has passed by the way and then been replaced by another one, because people keep thinking if they accumulate enough information, they're going to become spiritually healthy, and the information always fails.

Because it is not information that gives us spiritual vitality, it is practice. It is faith, it is the experience of God, not the accumulation of information about God. And subjective religion is a little bit scary, but it should be. Because when we al low ourselves to come into the presence of a God who welcomes us into his presence and yet, at the same time, forbids us to do that. When we come into the presence of God, it's a frightening thing and it should be.

But the experience of god is a very important thing and when Peter talks here about faith adding to faith goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, those are experiential things. They have nothing or very little to do with information. They grow out of information, but they go way beyond the information. Just like a tree grows out of a seed, but it goes way beyond the seed. It's much bigger than the seed.

"If we possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let me ask you this: When was the last time a friend of yours who was a non-Christian asked you what was it that made you different from them?

When was the last time you had a teacher in your school say, "You know, I am so impressed with your character, what is it that you've got that keeps you going?"

You see, I think, if the Holy Spirit lives in us, if we are Christians, and if we are the light of the world, then people should be affected by our presence,

and people should be curious about what's making the big difference. If people aren't asking us questions, maybe it's because we're unproductive and ineffective.

But goodness, knowledge, faith, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, these things keep that from happening. These things make visible everything that is important about our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter goes on and he says, "If anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind and has forgotten that he has been cleansed. Not only do we become ineffective in the world, but we become detrimental to ourselves if we do not practice godliness - if we do not live out the things that we've been taught.

Therefore, and this is the crux of the matter here and I think I've got time to talk about it... Therefore, my brothers be all the more eager to make your calling and your election sure.

God does call us - every one of us God calls us to the church, god calls us to himself, God calls us all to holiness, and we need to understand what all those things mean, because we need to be able to walk in them and walk in them effectively.

When we add things in increasing measure - those things that we've already gone over a couple times that Peter listed there. Once again, faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. If we have those in increasing measure, we're going to be able to discern the voice of God, we're going be able to understand his call, we're going to be able to hear. And that is the all-important thing.

You see, God doesn't only, I believe, God not only calls us all in a universal kinda sense when we're all called to love one another, we're all called to be holy, we're all called to allow Him to incorporate us into His body. But, each of us has a specific role in His body and in His plan for the world and we need to be able to hear the voice of God when he calls us to that

Now, not everyone's going to have thunder and lightning, not everyone's going to see writing on the wall. I think Joseph is a great example. Joseph, as far as we know, never heard God say to him: "Dear Joseph, you're going to go to Egypt and there's gonna be a big famine and you're going to

win a lot of favor with the Pharaoh and you're going to be a big deal and everyone is going to come to you and you're going to save my chosen people." Joseph ended up in Egypt against his own will. God has a plan for each of our lives - what we need to do is to apply ourselves, to be eager, to make our calling sure. Which means, to me, to be eager, to do the things that make it possible for God to move in our lives.

We need not necessarily say God what school do you want me to go to, even though that's not a bad idea and I highly recommend that before you choose a college that you pray - that you sincerely pray, and that you fast. And that you consider everything you know about the scriptures and see what really is right. That you listen to the counsel of your elders, of your parents, of people who are spiritually mature, of your disciplers. But it could be that you're not going to get any clear cut answers. You do know, however, that wherever you go to school, whatever job you take, whatever city you live in - you have to be holy, you have to be godly, you have to be the light of Christ in that area and God will take care of the rest.

I really want to encourage you to be eager to make your calling and election sure. That Christianity not only, that Christianity become something more than a set of doctrines. That it becomes engrained into your personality. That it becomes engrained into your character. That you become a little christ. That you become who He wants you to be, so that He can move you so that he can use you in the way that He wants to use you.

And peter ends up this part by saying, "For if you do these things, and you will never fall and you will receive a rich welcome under the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior of Jesus Christ."

You are really somebody, and hearing the call of God is, in my way of thinking, the equivalent of understanding of who we are in him - what His goals are for our lives and who He sees us as being. And when we allow Him to tell us who we are we may have to change some of our own ideas about ourselves - we may have to change some of our practices and habits to become what he sees us as being but when we do that we can be sure that we won't fall and that we will receive a rich welcome into his eternal kingdom.

That's gonna be worth whatever changes we have to make and I just really want to encourage you to do that -- to be willing to let God call you and to

be willing to follow the call that He gives you.

Thanks for listening and I will see you later...

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